



NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Education Services Newsletter

Summer/2010



THE SKY IS THE LIMIT! CONGRATULATIONS NDOC GRADUATES

The graduation ceremony was about to commence as family and friends continued to enter into the designated area for the Class of 2010. Graduates decked out in full gear, cap & tassel and gown, slowly preceded down aisles as sounds of the procession music filtered through the auditorium. Straight ahead on a flower decorated platform sat the Principal, Faculty and Distinguished Guests. The atmosphere was permeated with joy and pride. Family members watched as the graduates received their certificates and diplomas. As traditional as this graduation may have appeared, it was still unusual in comparison to graduation ceremonies that are held nation wide. These commencements were taking place inside prisons and correctional facilities throughout the state of Nevada.

Both High Desert Prison and Florence McClure Correctional Center held graduation ceremonies in June, 2010 to recognize the hard work, perseverance and accomplishments of NDOC inmates. For decades, comedian Bill Cosby and actor Timothy Robbins, co-star of the movie, Shawshank Redemption, have been outspoken advocates for personal responsibility, family values and redemption. The following words are quoted from their numerous keynote speeches given at correctional graduation ceremonies across the country.

Bill Cosby emphasizes that the achievement is just a beginning - a chance to get on a path that includes responsible fatherhood, continued education, and a renunciation of crime and violence. He implores to those that are fathers to reach out to their children - regardless of how long it has been.

"Those of you who've been abandoned, you know that pain, and you don't want that for someone you made. When you are released, you need to spend time helping your children with school. Make them love you, not with sneakers, or an iPod, but because of algebra. Somewhere, inside all of you, there's some sadness. Someone abandoned you. In many cases, it was your father. As males, there's a mantra that's given to us. Unlike the female, we don't cry. And it builds and builds into frustration. You must let go of your anger and move on. Anyone of you who's been abandoned -it's not your fault. Your absence is duly noted in the outside world. You've got no business here. Get out, and assume your rightful place."

Timothy Robbins believes at the heart of Shawshank is the idea of hope. That despite the cards you have been dealt, whether you are innocent or guilty, whether you wound up in this prison by just or unjust means, that every one is equal within these walls and that everyone possesses the same potential of spirit. That all within these walls have lives to live, choices to make, love to give and love to receive. That beyond the transgressions and oppression of the incarcerated life there is always the possibility of liberation, of freedom. And that freedom doesn't come from prison breaks or drugs, or idle fantasy, but from the transformative power of the mind, the transformative power of the written word. No one knows that more than you.

"Every man is worth more than his worst day." Every guilty man in a prison today is in there for his weakest moment, his gravest mistake, his lesser self, a moment, a failing, a misguided path he chose to follow. In writing this, Sister Helen wasn't making excuses for the sin or trying to advocate for an inmates release. She was simply reminding us that there are human failings, however brief, that result in lasting consequences, and that these moments of failings should not be the true and entire representation of the man. That despite his crime there is, underneath societies hatred of his transgressions, a possibility for that man to rise above his past and become whole again. That every man is capable of rising up to his better self and defining himself not by his moment of weakness but by his dedication to his strength and his commitment to change. This is something that I don't need to tell you, you that are graduating today. You know this in every cell of your body. You know this in your soul."

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A graduation ceremony is an event where the commencement speaker tells thousands of students dressed in identical caps and gowns that "individuality" is the key to success.
~Robert Orben

CONGRATULATIONS NDOC GRADUATES



HDSP Jazz Band performs at HDSP Graduation Ceremony



HDSP Class of 2010



FMCC graduates eagerly await recognition.



FMCC Class of 2010

GRADUATION CEREMONY HISTORY

The graduation ceremony dates back to the 12th century. Some feel it began with scholastic monks with their ceremonies in robes. A graduation ceremony is a cultural tradition termed as a rite of passage. The ceremony marks one stage of a person's life to another. All passage rituals fulfill certain universal functions: dramatize facing new responsibilities, opportunities and dangers, readjust the participant (and all in their social circle) to these changes and establish solidarity and sacredness of common values.

The Diploma

Original diplomas were made of paper-thin sheepskin, hand-written, rolled and tied with a ribbon until 100 years ago. A lot of documents were done on animal skins because paper-making was difficult. They changed to parchment, which was more practical, when the paper making techniques improved. It wasn't until the turn of the century that diplomas stopped being rolled up and instead, presented in leather binders.

The Music

"Pomp and Circumstance" was composed by Sir Edward Elgar (June 2, 1857 – February 23, 1934) and first performed on October 19, 1901 in Liverpool, England. Elgar is the first major composer to record his works systematically for the phonograph.

The Cap and Gown

Academic dress started in the 12th and 13th centuries when universities first began forming. Most medieval scholars had made certain vows, and had at least taken minor orders with the church so clerical robes were their main form of dress. For over 40 years the graduation gown color was gray. In the 1950's students began to wear gowns that were their school's colors.

The style of graduation hat has varied throughout the centuries. But, the one we are most familiar with today is the square, stiff hat that is believed to have been developed around the 16th century. There remains debate, however, why the graduation hat is square. Many say that it is square because it represents the mortar board (hat) of a master workman. Others feel the meaning is obvious – it simply represents the shape of a book. And still others feel that it represents the shape of the Oxford campus.

NEVADA'S "BANANA BELT"-LOVELOCK

Lovelock Correctional Center (LCC), is the department's seventh major institution, was constructed and opened in two phases. The first phase opened in August 1995 with two 168 cell housing units. Each 80 square foot cell has the capacity to house two inmates. Construction on phase two began shortly after and two additional 168 cell units and two 84 cell units were added to the institution, bringing the budgeted capacity to 1680 offenders.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lovelock is named for an early homesteader and storekeeper in the Big Meadows when the Central Pacific Railroad drove its rails in 1868, Lovelock's became a way station of some importance as mining strikes in the surrounding mountains, and agricultural development in the valley combined to encourage the growth of a small settlement. By the turn of the century it had become a town of about a hundred homes, a school, two churches, and a business district of almost three dozen firms, all within a few steps of the railroad tracks.

Lovelock in those days was a part of Humboldt County, and in 1905, Allen Bragg, editor of the daily Silver State in Winnemucca, came to pay his respects. "Lovelock is 'on the trail' to be a city of considerable magnitude," he wrote. "I think if I could come back to this dusty ball 50 years hence I should see a city of at least 50,000 souls, for Lovelock Valley, if put to its highest uses, would support 50,000 or 75,000 busy men and women, and it would be an ideal spot to raise children and start them in life with bright prospects."

Editor Bragg had a severe case of Nevada optimism, but Lovelock did prosper from the nearby mining activity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It achieved 2,803 residents by 1920, but that's the high point so far. Lovelock incorporated as a city in 1917, but was so broke two years later that the City Council laid off the Indian Policeman and the night Jailer. They had the city's Teamster sleep in the jail, cut the Police Chief's salary in half to \$25 a month, and instructed the City Clerk to see about turning off the street lights during bright moonlit nights.

Since then Lovelock's economy has become largely agricultural again. The conditions of soil and climate that produced the lush growth of grass for the pioneers is famous as Nevada's "Banana Belt." Lovelock boasts some 40,000 acres under irrigation in Upper and Lower valleys, most of it devoted to grain for feeding livestock, and to the alfalfa seed for which Lovelock is known around the world.

You may not think there is much romance or fascination in alfalfa, but that's only because you haven't met the bees. Alfalfa is not a cross-pollinator, and so its flowers must be tripped by insects in order to propagate. A special strain of bees was developed locally to perform this essential task. Called the leaf-cutter bee, this industrious insect does not live in hives like honey bees do, but in individual nests. Seeking to build these little pellet-shaped nests, the female bees eagerly occupy any pre-existing hole of the appropriate size and shape. Thus soda straws left unattended when the females are feeling the mating urge, will be filled with nest and eggs. So will the corrugations in a piece of cardboard, and so will empty nailholes in a fencepost. One local man had to give up on his outdoor barbecue when the leaf-cutters insisted on nesting in the gas jets of the burner.

Even more wonderful are the alkali bees, which also participate in the pollination of alfalfa. These bees are hiveless too, nesting in little burrows in the ground. They prosper in the alkaline soil of the ancient sea beds. But the alkali bee has a deadly enemy, the bomber fly. This aerial marauder comes whirring out over the desert floor after the alkali bee has laid its eggs, and searches for the little nests. When it finds one, it hovers in the air about a foot above the ground, and with the most amazing and deadly accuracy flips its own eggs into the hole as well. When the fly egg hatches, the larva instinctively digs down and devours the helpless bee larva. The full-grown fly emerges in the spring to begin the cycle again. But when the bomber fly emerges, it is as a wingless adult, and during the 20 or 30 minutes needed to shed its skin, and to dry and activate its wings, the fly is defenseless.

This accounts for one of the most unexpected (and ridiculous) rituals conducted anywhere in the Wild West: **Fly stomping**. It hasn't been done in recent years, but not so long ago, over three or four weeks in late May and early June, seed company employees made a huge grid across the desert floor with stakes and string. They hired every able-bodied 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grader in Lovelock, outfitted them with fly swatters and gave each one a patch of desert to patrol. At the twitch of an emerging fly, the kids pounced and swatted.

The sight of all these youngsters, prowling their sections of desert, yelping with excitement and lunging on the attack, is unforgettable. And fly-stomping was one of the growing up experiences that Lovelock kids carried with them to the grave. Regrettably, it was discovered that the trampling of the soil caused more damage to the alkali bees than the bomber flies, and fly-stomping came to an end. -David W. Toll

A brief Description of Lovelock History



Do what we can,
summer will have
its flies. ~Ralph
Waldo Emerson



INNOVATIVE PROGRAM OF THE QUARTER-PUPS ON PAROLE

Rosie was adopted, but then abused by her owner's boyfriend; Asia played too rough; Gemma had too much energy and became destructive; and Diamond was afraid of everything. These unfortunate dogs represent the typical animal rescued by animal welfare groups.

Organizations like the Heaven Can Wait Sanctuary see a never-ending flow of orphaned dogs coming into their program. When it became apparent that most of these pups were not ready to be adopted without extensive rehabilitation, they developed the Pups on Parole prison program with the two correctional facilities for women in southern Nevada.

Programs like Pups on Parole allow homeless dogs to live with prison inmates in their cells while they heal from the trauma they have been through. It is the job of the inmates to socialize the dogs so they will have a successful transition into an adopted family. The program was started to give the dogs a second chance, but surprisingly it has also been a healing experience for the inmates, as well.

The inmates apply for the job of "foster parent and handler" with the rescue group and the prison psychologist. After being approved Heaven Can Wait chooses a dog to live with an inmate handler.

Twice a week group training sessions are held with the women and their dogs. Every dog is taught basic obedience commands, leash walking and socialization with other dogs.

In the "off hours" the women build the confidence of the dogs with games of fetch or teach them about being touched through grooming and help them learn, what a "potty break" is all about. They also report on signs of illness and personality issues. The program is a joint effort between the inmates and the rescue group. Everyone in the program was not surprised to see how well the dogs responded to the training and attention, but they were astonished to see the confidence gained by the inmates.

The women enjoyed their new responsibilities and the decisions they had to make for the pups in their charge. They liked when the rescue group asked for their opinion and little by little the inmates became "experts" in the process of rehabilitating dogs.

Many of them have left prison and taken jobs working with animals. After all, what doggie daycare or veterinary clinic wouldn't want to have a person on their staff who could handle a fearful pooch or a rambunctious young pup? One young woman was hired on the spot, when she stopped a dog fight during her interview at a daycare for pets. Another surprising outcome has been the devotion the women have shown to the dogs. They open their rooms and their lives to the them, all while knowing that the goal is for the dog to be adopted to a new family. They endure canines that chew and rip their belongings and puppies that "get sick" in their rooms because they have sampled something tempting.

And every weekend they load up their "little ones" into a van so they can be taken to the adoption center. They say goodbye to the dogs they have raised, knowing that they may never see that pup again if he/she is adopted that day. One inmate explained it this way, "We are three teams working together: the dogs, the handlers and the rescue group. It is a life changing and heart opening experience for all of us." The following is a poem written by one of the inmates in honor of the Pups on Parole:

Little One

*No one's gonna hurt you here.
Soon; you'll see, how it feels to trust
'Cuz you've been rescued, just like us.
We promise that it's not too late
Because we all know, that heaven can wait.
Forget the broken road you've traveled on
For yesterday has come and gone.
That's a lesson we must all learn
And now, Little One... it is your turn.*

*Come with us, walk by our side
Hold your tail up high with pride.
And in the end, when we're all through
There'll be a family just waiting for you.
Because, Little One... so full of fear
No one's gonna hurt you here.*



In our next issue:

Scorecards-How well did our outcomes match up with our achievement goals?